



Governor's Column: Progress Made, More Challenges Ahead

Last January, in my State of the State address, I focused on several challenges facing Kansans. These included: providing the best schools possible for all our students; making sure that Kansas families have first-class, affordable health care; ensuring the safety and security of all our citizens; creating more good jobs across the state; and continuing to keep the state's finances on solid footing.

After several months of hard work, I can report that we have tackled these challenges, and made real progress for the people of Kansas.

First, on health care, Kansans families won real victories, with better access to care, with help on purchasing prescription drugs, and with a common-sense approach to reducing health care costs for small businesses. There's still a lot to be done, but we took real steps toward making health care affordable for all Kansans.

Second, on public safety, Kansas is a safer place because the ingredients for producing meth have been taken off the shelves. This was an important achievement that honors the memory of Sheriff Matt Samuels and the many others who have fallen because of this deadly drug.

Third, on security, we have helped military families in Kansas – who already face the uncertainties of war – through the Military Bill of Rights, which provides tuition waivers and health insurance protection for those who serve and their families. It is the least we can do for the soldiers who have sacrificed so much for us.

Fourth, on the state's fiscal health, my budget has kept ending balances high. Through careful financial management, spending discipline, and a revived economy, we have continued to strengthen the state's financial foundation.

Finally, on jobs, more Kansans are working today than ever before. The Kansas economy has added almost 34,000 jobs since I came into office. Every willing Kansan should have the opportunity to find a good job, and we're headed in the right direction.

I feel encouraged and energized by these victories. Working with the Legislature, we have made real progress. Still, there is a lot to be done.

Most importantly, on school finance, the jury is still out, so to speak. The Legislature's bill is neither responsible nor sustainable, and Kansas schools deserve better. Regardless of the Court's ruling, the Legislature must fulfill its obligations to the Kansas students.

In spite of the good economic news, too many of our fellow Kansans are still seeking a good job. We haven't fully recovered from the losses our economy sustained after 9/11. I call on all leaders, in business and government, to redouble efforts to work with me to continue revitalizing the Kansas economy. We've come a long way, but we can do better.

I remain truly optimistic about the future of Kansas. I believe we are on the right track, and our progress will surely continue if we keep working together.